

TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIOTAPE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AIMS High School Graduation Date

FOCUS GROUP

TUCSON, ARIZONA

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for coming today. We appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedules to give your input. Your input will ultimately be going to the State Board of Education. You have been asked here because of your expertise and involvement in the community. We are anxious to have your opinions.

I will start off by introducing myself. I'd like everybody to introduce themselves, and then what I'd like to do is establish a few ground rules, and then we'll get down to the business of today, which is addressing a couple of issues relating to the AIMS test.

I am Carol Galper (phonetic). I am a faculty member of the College of Medicine at the University of Arizona. I don't work for the Department of Ed. I don't know a lot about the AIMS test. That's why these people from the Department of Education, the State department, are here to answer any technical questions.

I do have two kids who are in public schools who -- one who last year as an 8th grader had to take the AIMS test, but that's about as close to the

detail of information as I know.

However, you do have fact sheets, so those fact sheets can help provide you with some technical support.

So that's who I am. Why don't we start with you.

(Introductions made.)

THE MODERATOR: Well, we have water. If people need water, just please feel free to ask to have cups and water passed your way.

In terms of ground rules, I thought, just so that we can stay focused on the topic today, that we could establish some. These are the few that I thought up.

One of them, the first one, is, one person speaks at a time, for several reasons. One is that it shows respect to other people. But also, this is being tape-recorded so it can be transcribed and ultimately analyzed and brought back as data to the Department, to the State Board of Education. And if there's a lot of voices, it's going to be hard to decipher what's being said.

The second one is that everyone is allowed their own opinion. I think that's an important one. We are talking about an issue that people have

divergent opinions on. And as well, each person's input is important. So everyone who is here has important statements to make, and we want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to hear them.

What other things would you like up there? You think that's good? Okay. All right, then, we'll get started.

You have two handouts. One is an agenda, and it's white, and the agenda shows that we are going to go from 9:00 to 11:00. If we finish earlier, we finish earlier. But we won't hold you hostage here any later than 11 o'clock. We know you all have busy schedules.

The AIMS fact sheet. Why don't we take just a minute to go over the AIMS fact sheet, just sort of peruse it.

(Silence.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for taking a little time to look over the facts sheet.

It sounds like many of you know a lot about the AIMS test. So this is just a way to focus on the tasks today, because the task today is to make sure that there's input regarding recommendations about graduation dates and what schools and/or districts need to do to meet the graduation dates for the AIMS test.

And we're going to start out by trying to address a couple of questions that you see around. I've written them up here so that you people over there can see. Question No. 1 is on that wall, and Question 2 is on that wall.

For lack of a -- they seem very connected, these two questions. So it might be difficult to sort of sort them all out. But what I'd like you to do is, maybe we can try to address the first question and have some dialogue on that and then move on to the second question, because we'd like to be able to influence and make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding this issue.

So, why don't we go ahead, and I'll read the first one, and then I'd like to see your input.

Remember, while this is being recorded, nobody's names are being attached to voices, so nobody's going to know who's -- paranoia tends to run, at least in State agencies, I know that.

What date would you recommend as the effective date for AIMS to be a graduation requirement for high school students? You can recommend different dates for the three different subtests. There's mathematics, reading, and writing. And please explain why.

So why don't we start out by addressing  
Question No. 1.

PARTICIPANT: My high school district supports the implementation of the graduation requirements for 2007 for two reasons. One, there seems to be some issues yet determined, the test (tape inaudible). I think that it's inherently unfair to hold kids to those high stakes prior to the testing (tape inaudible).

The second thing, our school district has aligned our curriculum for many years now with the State standards. So that's an issue that we feel very, very comfortable with.

I think that would also give all school districts the opportunity for curriculum aligning, to make sure that our kids have had these standards for a period of a few years, because we want to move them forward. Our hope certainly is that they would be ready for it. It's not a high school issue. It's an education issue.

PARTICIPANT: I'm wearing two hats, as both a Marana employee and Pima County Interfaith Council. But one of the things that I'm noticing as an English teacher is, in the last couple of years, that students have had an opportunity to have the six-traits

background for writing, and also for reading. I'm seeing a higher level of preparation coming in this year, and some last year.

So if we started with the 6th grade class, that would give a complete rotation. They would have all the (tape inaudible). I'm already seeing the difference. As we have aligned it with the standards, our students know more about what to expect. So I concur wholeheartedly that, given enough of a time line, that we can get these kids ready.

PARTICIPANT: I think the test should have been started 25 years ago. I think we need standards, and I think that we knew about the standard tests several years ago, and nobody's done anything about it until the test came in.

And I think we should keep the deadlines that are being proposed, that are on the table now, because if we procrastinate more, it just means more time for us to go through this rigamarole again. I think one time is enough. I think that unless we have deadlines to meet, things aren't going to get done. I think that we need to keep pressure on ourselves and stop procrastinating.

PARTICIPANT: As a member of the Arizona School Board Association, our feeling of the AIMS test

is that we do want accountability. We do think standards are important. We do think tests are important. But we do not feel that the AIMS should be a graduation requirement. Now, I know that probably will never happen, but that's where we stand about that.

Now, going on the other side, being a school board member, I've been a member of the Connell school district school board for over eight years, and we're an elementary school district. The philosophy of my superintendent is that we take these AIMS and the standards very seriously because we have the kids for nine years. We feel that if we don't do our jobs, then naturally, they're not going to pass the AIMS test in high school.

So we have aligned our curriculum for the last couple years. Well, we had in the past had standards, but now we're calling it standards, the alignment with, you know, the AIMS. So we are taking it seriously because we do want our kids to continue and go from grade to grade and be able to be successful. I mean, our ultimate goal is to have our kids finish high school and to be -- you know, because they're our future.

They need to be able to have some kind



of background so they can be productive citizens, whether it is to go to college or whether it is just to do whatever they -- a regular job, you know.

So I don't think that, in some cases where we have problems with some Hispanics or the Native Americans, they are -- they take the same thing. They are petrified with it because they feel they're not going to pass these and then they're dropping out. And that's not our goal.

Our goal is not to, you know, not have our kids graduate. So I think that there should be alternative type graduation requirements for those kids that are not going to go on to college.

PARTICIPANT: I'm going to come at this from a little different angle because I'm not an educator. I'm going to talk from the business community's perspective and some of the things that I see when I'm on a national or international level talking with companies who are going to employ.

I agree wholeheartedly that 25 years ago would have been perfect to implement standards. I think this is something that's got to happen. I think the business community, employers of the future want to know what they're going to have as an output.

Unfortunately, from my perspective, I

question the preparedness of the system to have this standardization and this test as a graduation requirement. Everything I've read shows that the test scores are still woefully inadequate, whether it's AIMS or any other sort of testing that's been done in the state of Arizona. I can tell you employers don't.

You've been building houses for how many years? I've talked to pipe-fitters and folks that would be subs in your business, and they're having to go back and teach basic fractions to 20-year-old people.

I wonder if the preparedness is there. I don't doubt the State has the appetite for this type of thing. I question whether we've got the stomach to invest in what has to happen: the link between the jobs that are out there right now, which require problem-solving skills, rational thinking, and the curriculum.

There seems to be in the business community's eyes somewhat of a disconnect, if they're going to go back and teach basic problem solving and fractions and basic arithmetic and reading before they can even get to job training for the same kids who do not choose to go on to college, and who still play an important part of our economy.

I couldn't agree more that this is something that needs to happen. I think force-feeding this now is going to be a tragedy for Arizona because I don't think we've got the curriculum. I don't believe the business community thinks we've got the curriculum in line with the testing.

I don't think the outcome the business community is seeing is adequate. They're going to spend tens of thousands of dollars to go back and remediate. That's going to hurt this economy. We're just going to continue to have to import people into the state to take the jobs that we would like to have Arizonans take.

This is not just a Tucson issue. It's a state issue. So we can either continue to be an importer or we can grow our own.

I can guarantee you, there's an established link between the economies, who are doing very well right now, and the types of companies and jobs that we want to create here, and education, the ability to innovate, the speed that innovation occurs.

And I can guarantee you, the business of the future is all going to be based on research. Research comes from innovation.

So I think we've got to go back a little

bit. I think standardization is right. I just don't think we're ready anytime in the near future.

PARTICIPANT: I'm here as a parent and as a parent of three children and as a Hispanic parent.

I'm going to have to disagree with you. The problem with the Hispanic families is that we don't have the education to give our children. If we had the education for our children, we would pass this test.

The Southwest is being very ignored. My son is in the 8th grade and he took the test last year, and so did my daughter.

My children are not getting taught to the AIMS test. What I have noticed in my children's schooling -- and I'm going to be straight. I have children in a Catholic school, and they're not even ready for this AIMS test. Okay? The teaching is being taught two weeks before the test is being taken.

I agree that if we don't get them ready at 4th grade and 3rd grade and then you expect them to go into high school and know all these things, how can that be possible for them to pass this AIMS test?

My son is very good in math. He's in close to geometry in 8th grade, and he couldn't even pass that math test on the AIMS. It is very hard.

And then to be said that Hispanics are

afraid of the test? They are not being taught correctly to have a fear of the test. How can you be afraid of something that you don't know about? Until you see it in front of your face is when people say it's like, "My god, I haven't even been taught this stuff. How do you expect me to pass it?"

So, as a parent, I think it needs to be done in 2007 because my children are not being taught yet.

And I hold the school accountable because I have spoken with the school about this. My husband is on the school board at our school. And we are addressing their curriculum to be changed in our school. But we are also fighting to have them change in the public schools in the Southwest, because the Southwest is being majorly ignored. And this AIMS test is not helping.

Mostly at Provo High School, Sunnyside (tape inaudible) school district, and Cholla, all those schools are not being addressed and not being held accountable with the principals or the teachers or the school board. The curriculum has to be changed for these children.

PARTICIPANT: I believe -- I'm primarily speaking on the math part. I believe the test

shouldn't go into effect until the school year 2009/2010 for the math, simply because of what I've heard here. It echoes that when we look at the graduation test, it's focused on algebra and geometry, which is more college-bound students, and we're looking for everyday real-life situations.

When we first started the alignment, we didn't know what that high stakes was going to be in the test. And ever since 1996, it's been a moving target for math. We went ahead with the 8th grade. We went ahead with the 5th grade. We went ahead with the 3rd grade. And we still don't know if it hits the target.

And the way it's aligned now, at least I feel comfortable with that 8th grade test. However, I felt great for that 8th grade test to even be a high school test. If they could truly pass this, they would be ready for society.

Even research shows that by 6th grade, if everybody is taught correctly, by 6th grade you have enough mathematics to survive in the everyday world. Not your more technical jobs where you're going to go on with more training, but just to survive in everyday life.

But now, where the test started out to

be all six strands for the high school is now down to just algebra and geometry, which is a traditional college-bound program. And the alignment underneath it is not aligned now with that high school graduation requirement.

We have districts that are going into prealgebra for 7th grade. They're going into algebra for 8th grade. And I will guarantee that those districts, those students will not pass the 8th grade AIMS test. However, I bet they'll pass the high school one, because their focus is algebra and geometry and not what's going to take to get the fractions across in everyday jobs that our students will be taking.

THE MODERATOR: So you're saying 2009/2010 for the math portion?

PARTICIPANT: For the math portion.

THE MODERATOR: But you suggested 2007 for everything? I just want to get clear on that.

PARTICIPANT: I'm here as a grandparent raising two children. And it seems that there's only -- I have a 5th grader. I put him in special ed because the school has not been able to provide the people there that they should have, certified teachers.

At the beginning of the year -- and I don't know if I made a mistake by putting them in a

charter school -- I brought my grandkids from Chicago, and I'm a native here.

I put them in a charter school, and it seems to me that there's always problems. And I've been up to the limit with that, with the charter schools and the problems.

At the beginning of the year they promised to have a special ed teacher on hand to prepare kids and, you know, do things for them. November, they still didn't have a special ed teacher on hand. They just got one in December.

So I'm trying to figure out, how is my 5th grader -- he comes home worried to death. I have to get him counseling because he's worried about the AIMS test. He comes home worried because he's not being prepared for this, and they don't have anyone there.

These schools make a commitment and a promise to do this, and they don't follow through.

I don't think the AIMS test should be given to those kids right away.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. You're next.

PARTICIPANT: I teach at-risk youth, a special program funded by the Arizona Supreme Court. It's geared to keep kids with poor literacy skills out



of the criminal justice system by giving them literacy and job skills. It's in a high-tech setting. It's in a professional workplace.

We've gotten five tremendous awards this year, national, local, and statewide, for everything from curriculum to teacher of the year and so on.

I can completely relate to what he was saying because I work with the business community. In fact, that's why I'm here. I can see that the students that are coming out are not getting -- coming with the skills that the business sector is looking for.

That's why our students have been really successful going into the high-tech field, even though the students qualify for my program by reading at or below the 5th grade level. And we have a waiting list every year.

So I have the dilemma of getting students in as juniors and seniors reading at the 2nd, 3rd, 4th grade level and have to try to get them to the 10th grade level to pass this AIMS test. Which, by the way, the AIMS test, I think, is sorely lacking in the skills which are the 21st Century worker skills.

There are a lot of sections that focus on college-bound and university-bound students. Other than writing business letters and memos, and basic

reading, writing, and math, it really leaves out a lot of job skills.

In fact, it really bothers me that the writing portion of the AIMS is done by hand. There's no computer skills. That should be done on a computer. That's how we're processing. We're graduating students to succeed in the 21st Century, in the workplace, and they're sitting in a cafeteria, in uncomfortable chairs, poor lighting, writing all these things by hand with a pencil. That's ridiculous.

I think the AIMS test has had so many changes to it. Every time we get ready to work with our kids to prepare for it, it's changed, something's different.

So I think we have to look at 2007 because we have to get our act together first and find out what it is we're testing and then give them the time to spend the lower grades to work their way up to where they can pass it. Because even though (tape inaudible) teacher of the year in Arizona, outstanding Arizona educator, America West Airlines, top curriculum.

I don't know how many of my students would pass at the 10th grade level when they're coming to me as juniors and seniors, when it should be at a

2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

And I have one other comment. I think that if a student is accepted by a university, that the AIMS test should be waived. Here's a prime example. I have a student at the university now who's in my program, who's in the honors program at U of A in electrical engineering, double majoring in math, has all A's and B's. He is in his second year, going into his third year. But he's from Bosnia and his English is poor. I would wager he wouldn't pass the writing portion of the AIMS. If he had to take it, though, he would have been denied a high school diploma under that requirement. And yet he's succeeding really well at the university in an honors program.

But I think there has to be a lot of consideration for minority students, students coming here with really poor English skills, but academically they're up further.

There's no way that we could implement it any sooner than 2007.

THE MODERATOR: 2007? Okay.

PARTICIPANT: Hi. I'm going to take this maybe from a little bit different perspective.

I work with teachers. I do a lot of staff development. I work with districts who work with

recruitment. We work with a very global look at education.

The issues that I can see that are creating problems in our schools -- and first of all, our students. That's what we're here for. We're here for the kids, so that they can succeed.

With the AIMS test being at 2002, we have a whole group of kids that you can call, maybe, latchkey kids, where the AIMS wasn't introduced and the standards weren't introduced until about '99, there was a strong push and we started to implement it. So here we have a whole group of kids here in the middle who haven't had the proper preparation. Their teachers are just now starting to get engrossed in standards, and they're starting to use standards to teach.

We're still doing many, many in-services on standards to try to get them on board.

Well, this has really left those children at a deficit. We cannot take that many years of children and say, "We just mark you off," because this is something that has to be done and business is demanding that we have these kids on mark now, not five years from now.

What are we going to do with all these kids, say, "You don't matter. We haven't prepared you,

but you're going to take the test because we're going to set the example. We're going to set the bar with you"? What are we going to do with all those kids that don't have that level of education?

Up until just this last year we had many, many high schools that didn't even have the math requirements they needed to meet AIMS. Kids are taking AIMS at a sophomore level. They haven't had the trigonometry. They haven't had the algebra 2. They're expected to pass that test.

Granted, they get to take it again if they don't. Many, many of our kids going to school -- and I've taught for 15 years -- they can be highly motivated. They can do really well. But if they take a test like that and they fail it, that destroys their self-confidence. They may not come back and take that test again. They're going to drop out of school. Many, many children are.

I think we should hold it off until, at the minimum, 2007, to start with 3rd grade. 1999, we knew AIMS was coming. We had standards. We started the push. Now let's let these kids grow and let's let these teachers get in place.

It's a much larger issue than teachers and administrators and school boards. It's

recruitment.

We have a huge problem in this state of getting qualified math teachers in our schools. We can't get them here. We don't pay enough. We can't compete with the East Coast.

So, I think we all need to get together as business and community, and we need to look at, okay, it's not just a test. It's having qualified teachers. It's having teachers that we've spent time retraining. It's not just having schools where, say, you don't have to have a teacher's certification, we will get you prepared. But if there's nothing there to get them prepared, how can we expect these kids to succeed when our teachers don't have the skills they need to be able to do this?

We have math teachers teaching calculus that maybe aren't prepared. They might be the social studies teachers, because these little rural schools can't get the math specialists in.

I think we have to look at the larger issue. It's going to take a while to get these things in place. Proposition 301 is going to help. What the State Department is doing in trying to provide classes, that helps. But it takes time, and I think we can't just disregard those students that have been caught in

between.

PARTICIPANT: I am concerned too with the latchkey kids.

I've taught for about 30 years. I've been working with teachers in schools right now. I would say that we adhere to the deadline established by the State.

An energy has arisen in schools that I've never seen before, energy and focus, inspired, driven by AIMS. We have students -- I've given -- administered the test every time it has been administered since the first field tests. And there's starting to be an about-face in teacher and student response to it and how seriously it's taken.

I can't speak to the problem with the math. In fact, I think that the reading and the writing AIMS are not asking students to do something that they are not already almost capable of. And I think that if we -- I worry about these latchkey kids.

But my recommendation would be 2002 with the condition that if the scores don't continue to rise -- because they have risen considerably, especially in writing, since we started taking it -- that there be a grace period for just those kids, the ones who have not been served by being trained up to

this point.

In fact, 2002 is their date. I think we should actually drop the bar and maybe put it at 10 percent or something like that for a passing score and raise it incrementally until the reading and the writing meet the math. So that students are still preparing.

Teachers and students are working like I've never seen before. And if it goes to 2007, we have six years of kids who are basically a population that's lost.

If the energy -- if we postpone the date, the energy will be gone. People like me will go back to business as usual.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT: These are observations, not criticisms, and certainly suggested with humility.

I spent 20 years teaching in two countries, Canada and the United States, and 10 years in business.

I find great irony in the fact that in Japan they're questioning their cultural happiness at a time when -- you know, that's a society that used tests as a sole indicator of success. I find great irony in the fact that some of the major intellectual



universities like Berkley are saying the SAT and ACT, maybe we don't need anymore.

When I did teach -- and I taught at a school where 98 percent went on to postsecondary education. And standards are important.

You know, I have the greatest admiration for the Arizona teacher. Education has been kicked around in this state as a political football.

After 30 years of professional life, I see where the schoolteacher wants to nurture and cultivate, and, in fact, in many ways, is not just a transmitter of math skills or history, but as a parent because of the latchkey situation, because of the changing dynamics of our society.

I respect what the business people are saying, including my boss and others. I respect their achievement. After ten years in business, I see the importance of the bottom line. I see from a business perspective a need to measure, a need to have standards. The bottom line, we have to get something done now.

But I also see the teachers and the students who get caught in the middle of this and are sort of the public whipping boy for the next politician that comes along. I have the greatest empathy for the

teacher and for the Department of Education, who are expected to please everyone.

You know, I think we need to go at this slowly. Business is great at making decisions, sometimes not so great at nurturing and cultivating. Education is great at nurturing and cultivating, but perhaps not so great at making decisions. If we could mix the two cultures and get a dialogue while we're listening, instead of talking with each other, and learning about each other's world, the kids would be the beneficiary.

I think the AIMS test is good. I think standards are good. But I think we're going to sacrifice three or four years' worth of children's souls, yours, mine, people who may not have the background that we have, on a cross of standards just for the sake of because it's taking a stand.

I think the AIMS test is good. But I think 2007, 2008, 2009 is the way to go.

I understand the energy. But, you know, I also understand that we're in a state that I think is about 51 of 52 in spending on education. I think we're in a state where we pay car detailers better than we do math teachers. I think we're in a state where we say, "Okay. Come from another state. Come to teach. I

don't care if you've got three degrees, you still have to pass a test. Until you pass the test" --

What message does that give the college of education? What message does that give the teachers who have spent four to eight years trying to achieve a degree?

I think what we need to cure in this state is an avid disregard and disrespect for the teaching profession. And I understand that maybe some of it has been justified. Just as in the car business, perhaps some of our failings have become far too conspicuous, and we pay the ultimate price.

I think this AIMS test and this whole discussion can be a catalyst for a true discussion. And I respect what he said about we need to do it now. But we need to prepare our students so that they will have the skills necessary to attract in business.

Because Tucson's Achilles' heel is, we don't have a middle class. We don't have the industry that we desperately need, but we can, with the right leadership, attract it.

We will have an AIMS test, and we will have standards, and we will get better. But I think we need to have compassion. And I think we need to do it respectfully for the kids who get caught in the middle

here.

I think the common ground is more dialogue. I think the major leaders, the Department of Education need to meet more often at weekend retreats. I know a couple of years ago there was one up in Prescott. Not in mass groups of 50, but where you get these people with teachers in a room like this and you talk for half a day and you listen and you learn, because both worlds are really different.

I would say 2007, 2008.

PARTICIPANT: Working with -- I've been working with teachers from the beginning of August, from the implementation of the standards.

What I've seen is a growth in the understanding of what we're about as teachers. And I'm one of those people who goes to work with teachers and talk to them about not compromising their integrity and not compromising curriculum in order to prepare their students for this. Because AIMS is not the be all and end all of what school is all about. AIMS is just another loop. I think we can do it.

But one of the things that's happened is, as I talk to teachers about what is supposed to be taught, is the realization that what is in the reading standards and what is in the writing standards are

stuff that we should be doing anyway.

If we like teaching kids -- as an English teacher, if my students are not learning how to write for any audience, for any situation, then I'm not meeting their needs. And if my students cannot read what it is that they're supposed to be reading, then I'm not meeting their needs.

When you said what you said, if -- I have a niece graduating from Cholla High School. She passed AIMS. She passed the writing and she passed the reading. If she hadn't passed them, I would be up in arms.

Because -- you know, for a child to graduate from high school without having those skills -- it doesn't matter to me what kind of breakfast they're not eating, whether or not they're latchkey. Those are skills that students should have. If they don't have those skills coming out of our high schools, coming out of our schools, they're not going to be capable of taking care of themselves. It doesn't matter what their conditions are coming to us. We need to prepare them.

But I am concerned about what happens -- if we keep the deadline that we have right now, which I think, working with the teachers and hearing the

teachers talk about how focused the students have become, I would hate to lose that focus, and I would hate to lose that enthusiasm and that energy that we have going right now.

But I also do fear for the students who are not with us, because, you know, this was implemented from the top down. So that kind of thinking, preparing the students, aligning the curriculum with the standards, preparing the students from kindergarten up, you know, that hasn't happened. We're looking at the top of the ladder here. And I would hate to have to punish students who were not -- who may not have been prepared adequately before the beginning stage.

I don't know. I think some compromise needs to be reached. I don't know about 2007, I think it's a little far away. And about 2002 seems to me a little too early because we would be punishing the students for something that they shouldn't take responsibility for. Maybe somewhere in between.

THE MODERATOR: Let's get these two and then we'll get you. I'm sorry.

PARTICIPANT: This discussion all focuses on AIMS. Maybe it should shift a little bit. Because if you listen to people and you read the

surveys, I don't think there's much disagreement about whether or not there should be AIMS.

The real issue is, how do you effect change. I've been out for 13 years, the last ten years our enrollment is six times what it was -- our enrollment today is six times what it was ten years ago. Our whole life has been change. We're always changing. And it involves teachers in the public.

In our little world, what I've learned about change is that to do it correctly, first off, there has to be lots of advanced warning and phasing.

Secondly, there's got to be lots of information. Uncertainty drives people crazy.

And third, if at all possible, people should not be put in a corner where they have no choices.

Those three things haven't happened with the implementation of AIMS. There hasn't been lots of advanced warning and a nice phase-in. Things have been kind of jerky, start and stop and go.

We just finished a -- there hasn't been a lot of good information. We just finished a series of Town Hall meetings in each one of our schools. We had 700 people attend those. And one of the most common requests of parents is, they don't want to see

practice tests. They don't want to see more samples. They don't want to see -- they don't feel -- they feel like there's this monster out there that they don't know what it is. There hasn't been clear information.

And third, people feel backed into a corner. Especially those parents of those students who are afraid they're not going to pass. If you were at the public hearing last night, what you saw was people angry and frustrated because they're in a corner. They know their kid is not going to pass this test, and they're upset.

So, I think we need to discuss how can we affect this huge educational system in this state.

I agree that one thing that AIMS has done for us is it has given us energy. We would not have gotten 700 parents to come to public meetings in our district three years ago in academics. It has provided motivation.

If there has to be a solid date, it should be 2007. That's what we agreed on, the terms of the Pima County Superintendents.

The alternative is to do some kind of a phase-in with the scoring so that -- and I know these are horrible words in some people's -- to say, but if we lower the standard on those tests and then



incrementally raise them until like 2007, they're up to where they should be. Because if we just wait until 2007, people are going to go, "Well, this too shall pass." And it will. And the energy will go away.

But if we set the bar, even if it's very low to begin with, at least people get used to the change. They go, "Ah, this is real."

I don't think that it's all that horrible, even though nobody wants to say that, to lower that bar a ways.

Everybody -- not everybody, but people like to point to Texas as being this example of a state that works. Texas sets their standards for 8th grade. They're not 12th grade.

It at least sets the minimum. It at least makes sure that people are coming into the workforce knowing how to do fractions. It at least addresses the concerns of the business community, which are legitimate concerns.

PARTICIPANT: First of all, I'm representing the superintendents of Pinal County.

I don't -- from what I gather from most of the superintendents, I don't think the date is a big question to them.

The story that I get over and over is,

if we're going to use this AIMS and we're going to measure students and work with them, we need to get the test back in plenty of time before graduation.

I don't think the AIMS test has done this in the past, you can correct me on this. But that's their theme, that we need to make correction. We need to get this thing back before graduation date. So that's the big marquee that a lot of the superintendents are saying from that standpoint.

And I would kind of agree with the gentleman there about being boxed into a corner. When we take the AIMS and we use that as a -- we're trying to funnel everybody into the same thing. I think you run into a problem. We're all different. We all have different ideas and have different abilities, and when you try to use that one thing, I think that's a real problem right there.

So I think in boxing people in, I think that that's basically what we're doing.

The other thing is, I can't quote the person's name, but I saw in the Arizona Republic yesterday where they were also having these meetings. A psychologist made a comment that I liked. I wish I could remember her name, but she said: You know, we're using AIMS as a tool, and the only thing that measures

success or failure. Maybe it should be just a tool, one of the tools of many things that we measure students and not make it a policy where that's it. That's the bottom line. You either pass it or fail it, or you're out.

Well, I think you need to judge a person by a lot of other different things. How would we all like to be judged by one thing? Well, I tell you, in a hurry, you see, I think that's what we're doing.

Obviously, if we gave the tests to the students who do well in school, I can tell you right now, we wouldn't be talking about low test scores. We'd knock the socks off of people. But we're encompassing everybody.

Just one last comment on a social issue. See, I think this thing with success or not is kind of like a social issue. Our school is very, very small. I'm sitting there the other day and we had a young person who's in trouble. They were talking about the parents and the problems. His dad's got one name, his mom's got another name, and he's got a third name. You need a score card to tell what's going on.

I mean, somewhere along the line, if we want things to improve, society's going to have to make some changes. You need a score card and a program to

see who's doing what. We kind of joke, maybe we need to put names on the back of them like ballplayers. But it's a serious issue.

But the bottom line is, representing the superintendents, the dates and the times you have up here, they're interested in getting this thing back ahead of time so that they can do remedial work and make some adjustments and some changes and then move on from there.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you. I've heard a lot of great comments today. I certainly appreciate your comments as you sort of start to approach where I'm coming from, which is, again, from the business community.

I think there are three private sector folks here. The balance are all educators, part of education. If the business community was invited to these sort of things and didn't show up, shame on the business community. But frankly, I think it ought to be 51 percent business, 49 percent educators in these sort of discussions, because what we're talking about is outcome.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, we can talk about preparation. I've heard some of those words throughout. I admit, I am not an educator. I

have the utmost respect for what all of you do, and I'm going to get to that in a minute.

I don't know what preparation really means in education. What it means in business is, what is my outcome? What am I going to receive out of the high schools, or the universities as well? Am I going to receive a prepared student who can then go on and hold a job, as a member of this community, as a member of this society?

I want to see people come out and hold jobs, be productive, pay their taxes, do the right things. At the end of the day, that's what survival is going to be all about.

We can kid ourselves saying that they're great -- you know, they have good hearts and this and that. Well, I think we all do. I don't know a six-year-old that doesn't have a good heart. That happens later on.

But at the end of the day, these people need to be productive parts of our society. The outcome is what we're getting to drive to. That's what business drives to. What's my outcome of all this?

Now, initially, I was not a big advocate of any sort of deadline for an AIMS, because, frankly, I don't think comprehensively this state is ready for

it.

I've heard the superintendents are in favor of zero seven, and I've heard zero nine and ten. Well, that's fine. If a date is set, then there has to be a way to work backwards from that to establish a comprehensive plan.

And that means we invest in technology, get it in the classroom. Because that's what every auto mechanic, every diagnostic technician is working off of those days.

There was an excellent point. If they're still writing things in blue books like I had to, then they're not prepared for a job. I don't care if they can actually write it, they're not prepared.

We've got to insist that teachers are paid as professionals. If we don't do that, and I am -- I will tip my political hand, I am not a big proponent of paying a lot of additional taxes. But I tell you, if I'm going to pay my taxes, if I'm going to pay more in terms of taxes, I would be in favor of paying more if I knew teachers were part of the mix.

Then, once you pay teachers at the level that they ought to be paid at for the work that is done, then expect something out of them. If we have bad teachers, get them the hell out of the schools,

because they're not doing their jobs and they're not giving us output. They're not giving us an outcome that they want.

If they are, we need to pay them more money, because they are our most valuable resource. They're providing our outcome.

There is a huge disconnect, in my opinion, between the State Department of Education and the Department of Commerce. I bet you the two don't talk to each other. I don't see anyone from the State Department of Commerce at this meeting.

The outcome is going to be productive citizens who hold jobs. I don't care what anybody else wants to say, that's going to be the outcome that we're striving to. Because they're going to go build houses. They're going to fix or sell cars. Or they're going to be optics technicians. Whatever the case may be, we've got to deal with an outcome.

That means applying the knowledge to the math teachers, in part. Teaching math for math's sake is a wonderful and noble idea. But at the end of the day, that kid better be able to apply his fractions or his algebra or his calculus or his quantum physics to something.

That's the greatest fear, in the

companies I talk to, what's my outcome? What's my outcome in Arizona as opposed to other states?

If not, we have nobody else to blame but the business community and education. We need to be in the back office of Silicon Valley.

We wonder why we don't get high paying jobs here? We need to look in the mirror, because we didn't do the comprehensive work that needed to be done.

So if there's a date to be set, let's work backwards.

And by the way, that has got to include the parents. I think the teachers shouldn't be afraid to fail students. My parents weren't afraid for me to fail a class. I got a butt whooping at that point, not to mention a few other things. But there was no fear in teachers 25 years ago to fail students. That fear is no longer there, I think. So teachers are failing, I think.

If you aren't producing -- if you have the curriculum in place and they're not prepared, don't move them along. Because they're not going to provide a good outcome. If the parents don't like that, then the parents have to go look in the mirror because there is a responsibility there for all of us.



So I hope this becomes an outcome-driven process. And if it means postponing it ten years, let's postpone it ten years and work back and get a good comprehensive program that takes teachers, technology, students, curriculum. All this counts. Let's run this parallel, and at the end of the day we'll have the best possible outcome as productive citizens. That's what we're driving for.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We're going to have to start moving on to the next question soon.

PARTICIPANT: I'd just like to speak from the perspective of a teaching staff at a high school that accepts and embraces AIMS, that is really focused in our curriculum.

There's been a lot of motivational staff training. So we are really interested and positive about the impact of having standards. We have aligned our math curriculum to the standards.

A couple of problems that we are finding. One is that, because this has been implemented so fast, we feel like we're building a plane as it's flying above the ground. We gave our kids the writing test. We had people complete or approach, and then the State decided to change the way the writing test was scored so that more kids passed

the test.

We found out just last week that that was retroactive, so the kids who failed the test last year now passed the test, but the State is not going to send letters to those kids. We're expected to send a different document when the State has already generated a document to those kids who passed. So for our parents, the credibility is low.

Math. We've analyzed our curriculum. We feel like we are creating a curriculum that doesn't exist in any book, and it's called AIMS curriculum. Algebra and geometry is aligned with only 60 percent of the AIMS curriculum. There is no such thing as census and surveys in algebra and geometry.

We've invented a whole other course to teach our sophomores so that they get all these other issues about statistics and probability that aren't taught in algebra and geometry.

So we are struggling. And all schools are struggling with kids who are not ready for algebra 1, 2 in a freshman year.

The State has now mandated that all students have algebra and geometry in their first two years of high school. What are we doing to our kids in terms of forcing them to take math classes that they're

not ready for? When do they start to get ready for math? 2nd and 3rd grade? We're telling our sophomores, "You have to pass the math test to graduate."

The math test is not developed. We have no real idea what is on it because there's a field test next October, although we're going to test our sophomores this year in May. So we are struggling to try and be the best that we can be, but it's a moving target.

The State is telling us you really can't analyze improvement over the years because you can't compare the AIMS scores from one year to the next. So we're trying to figure out, how do we measure the improvement as a school? If you can only measure the kid's score to the kid's score, but we can't -- we can't look at growth over freshman, sophomore, junior, senior year because they're saying the test, you can't compare the test like that.

I like the way Stanford gives us all kinds of data that we can just desegregate by quartiles. We can really see growth there.

We don't have the capacity to disaggregate AIMS scores like that and use it in terms of real school improvement.

So we're really trying to be the best we can be, and we're trying to turn all our teachers in learning the six traits. After two years of push, push, push, we have 30 percent of our high school teachers trained, because there's huge waiting lists of our staff development to get the training on those fixed traits. So we're struggling.

We think our sophomores are really in a bind here because we haven't been able to have time -- and even the lower grade levels, these kids are -- our incoming 8th graders, we've got 300 kids who are not ready to take algebra. But we're going to say to them, "You're going to have to say that this is algebra."

That's the big picture for us.

PARTICIPANT: And just to piggy-back on that comment, that going into algebra, we're taking -- I know in our district we're going for two hours of math, which then takes away from other curricula that the kids are there for, for the fine arts, for their other -- even band will be taken away until they get that. So there's a lot of force going on there.

The other thing, if you look at it, in the math world out there, research has shown there's an 85 percent, 90 percent math phobia with adults. And yet, those adults are the ones turning around, teaching

our children.

And then the ones that are extremely good at math aren't in education. We're very lucky to probably to have .1 percent of math teachers out there that are enthused every day about teaching math and going on professionally to learn the new and different ways to help that 90 percent phobia that's out there.

Because when I'm out there, and I'm in the classrooms, and I'm across the country looking at teachers, and I can't blame them. They're teaching math the way they were taught. And it's that whole math phobia just going -- recycling itself over and over again.

To go back with the technology, I feel that we can get our kids much further with technology. However, AIMS does not provide for the test.

We're spending so much time taking from 3rd, 4th, 5th, all the way to high school. These kids don't know how to divide. So, year after year, I'm spending six weeks on division. Whereas, if they had the concept of division, give them the calculator, they know what to do. It's just that whole process.

Again, teachers down there -- and I don't blame them. If I was an elementary teacher, I'll be honest, language arts would be the last thing I

would teach, because I would be teaching more math.

But in the elementaries, they feel better teaching reading and language arts, science and health. I know there's been many times where kids are coming up through our system that have 20 minutes of math a week. And yet, we expect them now to jump into high school and take this high-stakes test.

They come back to me in 8th grade, and I've gone back in the folders and the last time they passed a math class was 3rd grade, and yet they're moving on and moving on and moving on.

The other thing that I don't think the general public realizes, and I don't -- when you look at the AIMS scores and the way the AIMS test is graded, you're looking at a very comprehensive test, you know, 8th grade, 5th grade, 3rd grade. It covers all six strands. It's mixed up. There's not one strand. And in math, the mind does not work the same.

Research now on the brain says the computational part is back on the top of the cranium, the algebra thinking. The higher level thinking is in front. There's a lot of movement that has to go back and forth there.

And when we have kids that are, you know, being taught, trying to use this brain, but it

hasn't connected here yet, we have a lot of problems going on.

But the Stanford test is scored in the sense that if a kid is scoring up to 50 percent, they get 50 percent of the Stanford correct. They're working at high school or post-high school level.

Where we're looking at AIMS, with the same -- even -- to me, it's even a more difficult test, and we're expecting 80 percent mastery overall to meet the standards.

And when we look at those two different -- I mean, give me Stanford anytime.

THE MODERATOR: We haven't heard from you, and what I would like you to do is sort of say what you have about this question. But we only have about 45 more minutes, so we need to sort of move on to the preparation.

We've had some dialogue about what schools need to do. But why don't you try to address both of these issues.

PARTICIPANT: You want me to address both? Okay.

I have a couple questions before I make comments. And maybe I should direct this to one of the Department members.

When were the AIMS standards first implemented for Grade 3?

PARTICIPANT: The standards were adopted by the State Board in 1996, somewhere in 1996. When schools actually implemented them probably varies from district to district.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. Because from the association perspective, representing a number of public school employees in the state, the problem with AIMS is that the implementation has been, in effect, backwards.

The focus has been on -- and the thing that has caught the public attention, which is graduation. Without those kids that are taking the graduation test having the benefit of a career in the schools, of the standards and the appropriate preparation. That's where the perception of unfairness has come.

So the recommendation, on behalf of my colleagues, would be not to implement the AIMS test for graduation until the students that are going to take the test for graduation have their entire educational career in the standards that have been adopted.

I don't know whether 2007 is the accurate date or that was the basis, but that certainly



seems to be in the ballpark of reasonability.

I have a second question. Do colleges and universities in this state recognize the AIMS or a high school diploma for admission?

PARTICIPANT: I don't think you need a high school diploma to get into the --

PARTICIPANT: Okay. That's --

PARTICIPANT: There's other criteria. It's one of them.

PARTICIPANT: It's one of them, but it is not absolute.

PARTICIPANT: Right.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. This is another issue that has come forth. And I appreciate the attempt, and I agree with the attempt to make the diploma have a higher value in the eyes of the public and in the business community.

I would think that another criterion, in terms of determining a date, would be, I think the colleges need to recognize this, because in many respects you might have the law of unintended consequences occur where, "To hell with the AIMS. I don't need to take it because I can move on."

And we need to have that tie-in from the greater community.

The third question I have is, will AIMS be required for all students to graduate? And what I mean by "all students," I mean students attending both public and private high schools?

PARTICIPANT: We don't have any jurisdiction over private schools by State law. All public schools and charter schools, yes.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. That's where the colleges' and universities' recognition of this is that -- the idea is that we're supposed to have the standards for getting a diploma in this state, yet we will have schools issuing diplomas in this state, with equal validity as the ones in the public sector, that will not necessarily be held to the same standards.

PARTICIPANT: That's part of the problem.

PARTICIPANT: But the thing is, I think if the colleges and universities recognize that to some degree, then you will have a greater standardization, which I'm hearing from the two main spokespersons from our business community.

The last comment I have is that you have to look at standards versus measurements. Just because you don't have a measurement doesn't mean you don't have standards. But having the measurement there does

drive the outcomes base.

So yes, I think there needs to be an AIMS, but not apply it until we have some of those other issues coming about. And I think the Department may have made some mistakes in the last few years that has created a reactionary feeling among many teachers in this state.

THE MODERATOR: Why don't you address what you -- so you think that there is a date, but in terms of implementing it, what the schools need to do is?

PARTICIPANT: Dealing with the districts? Okay.

First of all, we have the two TUSD people that have had a great deal of input and authority in getting TUSD ready, and they've done a very good job, frankly. So, I think TUSD is probably ranking a little bit higher than many of the districts around the state in preparation for the AIMS, yet our test scores still could be recognized as relatively inadequate by many people in the community.

The one thing that I think, that there has to be several things that the districts must not do.

First of all, there's a great fear among

the teachers that they're going to be held accountable to test scores based upon -- no matter how much research you do, they're arbitrary. And in promoting merit pay and other things. They're called pay for performance now from Prop 301 -- based upon their individual test scores.

And we need to be careful of that. Because I know how I can get test scores to go up in most schools, is have those kids that are the weakest be absent that day.

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to bring up something that hasn't been brought up.

PARTICIPANT: If I --

PARTICIPANT: Oh, I'm sorry.

PARTICIPANT: If you --

THE MODERATOR: We'll get you next.

PARTICIPANT: Okay.

PARTICIPANT: The second thing is that when we're talking about this reform in standards, which I heard, we have to be looking at this not in a vacuum, and this is another error that has created a reaction from many teachers.

What came along when AIMS was coming along was also a push for school councils and decentralization. Unfortunately, the person who had

been proposing that when she was in the legislature, Ms. Graham-Keegan, dropped that issue to focus on AIMS. And those things need to be done together, because what you have to have happening is you have a modernization of the apparatus of the public school district system. And that's whether technology comes in as a major decentralizing tool.

And we have to also look at three basic skills that aren't really measured by AIMS, but we need to see effectiveness. Two of them are really hard to measure. One is listening skills, and the other is speaking skills. And the third one is the computer and technology skills that are not measured.

But I can see why those three are not done. Because the first two, how do you measure without having a tremendous cost impact? The third one, with the computers, is that even though they're available, the problem is getting those computers with -- the apparatus that you have in the school districts that tend to be centralized, how do you get them into the classrooms and teachers trained to do that?

That has been something where we need to look at this, as well the date or the graduation.

Thank you very much.

PARTICIPANT: One of the things that concerns me on the procrastination of it, of putting off the test, is that we'll be under a new superintendent shortly, and then all of a sudden this will give a lot of people who wanted the procrastination a chance to go in. The new superintendent is going to want to put their stamp on education.

I can see us starting all over again and doing the research, and we won't be any farther now than we are 15 years from now because we're starting all over again. And that bothers me.

And I think maybe he had a good idea in maybe lowering the bar, and I think that by -- and putting the different bar levels in advance, and then that would be something that would be getting the program in play now. But I'm afraid that if we get into -- don't have something in play right away, we're going to get into -- it becomes a political issue, and we're getting -- already we're getting the State legislature into it. And Heaven knows, that's going to be a disaster.

And so, if we don't do something, nothing's going to happen. And all this energy that we've gotten, that's started, and people are earning,

we're going to lose all that. I think that his idea on the bar, that keeps that energy level that we have gotten into our schools now, that will keep that in play. I think he had a very good idea.

That could make the implementation done now, but it also gives the people who want to the 0-7 objective, the final bar could be at that level. And so I think that's a good idea and a good compromise.

But I just really am afraid that when we go into a new superintendent, it becomes a political football and nothing's going to be done. We're going to start all over.

PARTICIPANT: To piggy-back the tremendous push already, there's been major changes already that's happened. I think our kids are going to benefit from it. It goes back to, we can't punish the kids now because of what was lacking then.

I think that what we have is in the top ten standards in the nation, and that's been addressed. But we are at the bottom of expenditure. And I'm not just talking teacher salaries, to recruit.

It's very difficult to get the proper staff development that our teachers need to change with the technology. We are 20 years behind when it comes to our teachers being able to implement the technology

into the classroom.

What I think we need for a big math reform would simply be to get teachers that are qualified, that have shown that they're quality teachers, and have them work with the teachers, the newer teachers as they come in.

However, when that's mentioned to the district, we can't. We don't have the money to take a teacher out of the classroom and give them a salary on top of that.

THE MODERATOR: So one of the things you're saying is, to implement these things, is more funding?

PARTICIPANT: A lot more funding. And like I said, yes, we need it for salaries, but we need it -- because the public sees that we need -- you know, the salaries need to go up. But that's all they hear, is that teachers need more money. We're not just saying, you know, teachers just need more money.

We also need it for -- because in any business -- education is the only, if you want to call it a business, it usually is the only ones that have to give up their own time to get trained. They usually have to pay for their training.

PARTICIPANT: Just to keep their job.



PARTICIPANT: Yeah, just to keep their job. And at the same time, it doesn't move us up any on the pay scale.

Just to give you an example, I got my master's five years ago, and I figured by the time, with the pay raise that I've got, I'd pay for my master's by the time I retire, and that's not the interest.

PARTICIPANT: Just a comment on your second question.

What we need to help us pull this all off is results. When we get the Stanford results, we put teams of teachers together in the summer. We analyze our results. We break them down by quartiles. We find our weak areas. We send all that data and all that information out to our strategic planners, out to our parents, and we plan for the following year. When the kids walk in on August 18th, whatever it is, we are ready to go.

We don't get AIMS results until, I think I got my 5th grade AIMS sometime around November. That's too late. That's inexcusable. And frankly, when we talk about accountability, I think we have to all be held accountable, and that includes ADE.

Don't put my name on that.

THE MODERATOR: So money and feedback?

PARTICIPANT: Absolutely critical that we get the feedback, that we get the data, we get it in some form that we can break down and that we can analyze according to demographics or quartiles.

It's absolutely important we know who our kids are that are falling far below. But we can guess on them, and we do a pretty good job.

Certainly, I think it comes down to money. It's really informative hearing from the business community. I certainly agree with a lot of the things you say. Not everything.

But I guess my question for you is -- and I've spent my entire adult life in public education, so I'm not a business person.

But I think common sense would tell you that in order to run a successful business, you have to have capital up front. You have to make an investment, continuing investment in your business, in your employees, your product, in the community.

And we have been held to a very high standard of accountability. We're getting higher all the time. And we love that.

And Butterfield and the Marana school district has been used as an example by the State as a

school district that has been teaching to standards since 1996, and the essential skills before that. You have two schools' representatives here that are both national (tape inaudible) excellence, recognized as two of the best schools in the United States.

So, accountability, bring it on. But also, we need your help. We need your help to go to the State legislature with us and say, "Where's the money?" We have some of the best standards in the United States, and we are at the very bottom of the barrel in funding. Our future, our kids' future depends on it.

I think -- I heard you say "dialogue," "talking," "getting together." I couldn't agree more. Because when we operate in isolation -- you know, we're looked at as whiny educators. We're looking at you guys and saying, "We're doing the best we can. Give us a break."

We need to break that down, and we need to attack the problem where it is in terms of funding, and that's a hundred miles up the freeway.

I have to throw my plug in. As an elementary principal, I have to disagree on that elementary teachers don't teach math. I couldn't disagree with you more. What the elementary teachers

don't teach is social studies; foreign language that we're mandated to teach by the State, but don't have time to teach; science, somewhat.

I have to tell my folks all the time -- the biggest question I get all the time is, "We want our kids to be the very best, but we don't have time to teach everything we want to teach." So my fear is that we lose a whole part of that kid that we're not teaching to.

What we are teaching is math and language arts. That may be all we're teaching a good part of the time.

I spent three weeks in Japan, studying their educational system in 1998. And folks, we don't want to be Japan. Trust me.

THE MODERATOR: We've got about a half hour left.

PARTICIPANT: I have some very practical things I'll tell you quite quickly. It has to do with money, (tape inaudible) and incentive.

Money. English teachers already carry the great burden of skills building in high schools. They grade 150 papers a day. As everyone knows, (tape inaudible) English teachers. If students are going to be successful in reading and writing, they must write

every day.

My first recommendation -- first of all, money is to retrain and to support teachers.

My first recommendation is to give every English teacher a second grading period. That's one period to plan, one period to grade, and they'll still take work home.

Secondly, cap English classes at 25. I don't have to explain why we would do that.

Third, for retraining, and there needs to be retraining and retooling for teachers who are not trained in standards-based instruction. Teachers should be paid decently to go to (tape inaudible) but especially if we're going to -- if students are going to be accountable in 2002 or something. We just need to be retrained now, and they really should have summer institutes at per diem pay.

Fourth, middle school teachers teaching language arts should be certified in their field. What we have is a lot of middle school teachers who do PE and do a couple of language arts classes, so students come to the high schools without the skills to read and write. This will cost money as well.

Timely reporting, very important to (tape inaudible).

I would also like to recommend something else in terms of administration for the exam, and that is a midsummer administration. So students who have -- seniors, for example, who have graduated from high school, didn't pass all three AIMS, would go to a summer session and have a State-administered AIMS test after summer school is over. So they could have got in and finished after that.

Finally, I wish this were mine. I heard it last night, but I thought it was wonderful. Incentive. This should not just be punitive. Accountability is actually good. If State universities, if appropriations could tie scholarships to successful scores on the AIMS, then this is going to certainly give it a new face.

We want to keep good students in Arizona. We give lots of money to students to stay here. Why not attach scholarship funds to success on the AIMS?

PARTICIPANT: My job as a school board member, that's what I've been elected for, is to do the best that I can for all children in the state. So I wanted to apologize. I wasn't pinpointing certain groups of people.

My frustration is that we are not

focusing and trying to educate all groups of people. And we have a problem with dropouts. So that's why we focus on those groups, thinking we want to improve so they don't drop out.

We feel the AIMS is negative in the way it was approached, from the top down. It was wrong to start with. If we started this program at the bottom, you know, started teaching our kids in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, there would be no problem. I believe that they would be successful and they would graduate and, you know, do wonderful things.

But because we started at the top down, those groups of people that are caught in the middle are the ones that are paying the price.

So I think that, you know, definitely money -- we're always going to the legislature for money. But they don't like to give us money because, quote, we don't -- their words, accountability. "Okay. We'll give you money. We'll give you accountability."

"Well, we'll gladly give you accountability if you give us more money."

But, you know, still, hopefully, with Proposition 301, we are starting to get there.

Timely reporting is a great tool because I know that, you know, you love to get the results back

so you can start the remedial, so you can be ready for the next school year, so you're not starting behind the eight ball and always trying to play catch-up. Because then the kids get frustrated. The teachers get frustrated. It's a no-win situation.

What he said about dropping the bar for this group that had to start at the top and not get all the proper training, I think will make the kids more successful and not put a negativeness on this test score so that they will keep trying and trying. You know, we will get to keep kids in school so that they will graduate and be productive citizens and stay in this state.

Because our goal is -- you know, definitely, we need to work together with the business community because, you know, we want to raise the bar on all levels and make Arizona one of the top.

PARTICIPANT: Quickly, that's an excellent point, calling business to task a bit.

I think what you would see, and I've seen this in smaller pieces of the community. Frankly, I think that business folks are just waiting for some sort of program that will give them outcomes.

Right now, I think the perception is, the companies I talk to, "It's fractured. It's broken.



Nobody knows what we're going to do with this AIMS thing. Nobody can agree with anything. We can't get the funding for it. You know, frankly, I'm not going to make a significant investment. I'm not going to take the risk unless I feel like I'm getting an outcome at the end of the day."

And we've got some harmony in this state, that everybody's going to march off together. We're going to do this thing. We're going to implement this strategic plan, and at the end of the day I'm going to have an outcome.

We've seen in Arizona, and in Tucson in particular, where business -- when they know there's an outcome, and their outcome is qualified workers, they'll say, "Okay. Here's what I'm going to do." Pima College, and I'm speaking as Universal Avionics. This is such a good program. The result at the end of the day is, I can get qualified technicians. Not graduates from the University of Arizona. Not at the college. Not even college graduates, just a training program.

"I'm going to give you my equipment. You train them on my equipment. I will dedicate my HR staff, help you write the curriculum for what I do. That's my investment, because this is quality. At the

end of the day, I want outcome. In 12 months, I'm going to start hiring graduates. So that's what I want."

Do you ever think we'll get to that point? And if it's part of AIMS in this comprehensive revamping, I think you'll see business jumping in. But it's not going to happen until there's agreement in this state that this is the direction we're going to go.

And then if business doesn't jump in, shame on them. I love chastising businesses.

I think we would see it happen. The business folks here, chime in if I'm wrong, because businesses know the investment it takes to get what they need, and that's people right now.

PARTICIPANT: Just one comment right there. Didn't Burr Brown have a program with Pima, where their workers went through Pima before they went out to Burr Brown?

PARTICIPANT: (Tape inaudible) has another program like that as well, aircraft interior. These are not a college graduate -- necessarily a college graduate program. These are folks coming out earning 15 to \$20 an hour.

We have to have fundamental skills, and

unfortunately, they're having to go back and teach too many of them because we don't invest the right way in education, in my opinion.

Maybe what we need to develop is state and local strike teams. Once the standards are established, then compromise the program so we don't run into the political issue of the superintendent going away in 24 months or 18 months. That is something to pay attention to. That's important on both parts.

We do see weaknesses. If this man saw a weakness in his company, or he saw a weakness in his company, he'd probably go patch it.

We could send a strike team, if necessary, to go do it. So maybe we need to develop a concept of state and local strike teams that says: If we've got weaknesses in these test scores, we know this is what we're striving for, let's deploy a strike team. Let's go find out why. We know we're going to pay teachers better. We know we're going to invest it. If we're having another problem, let's go support that. Let's get the thing up.

Let's not just say, "Oh, you got poor scores in that school." Let's deploy a strike team of professionals to go support the superintendents and the

teachers.

And lastly, refocus the curriculum to the jobs, and if that means band gets left out of curriculum, so bloody what? So what?

PARTICIPANT: Well --

PARTICIPANT: Put the emphasis on math --

PARTICIPANT: Match the curriculum to the jobs.

THE MODERATOR: You go next, and then you, and then you.

PARTICIPANT: The key position to defending band.

THE MODERATOR: We've only got 20 minutes.

PARTICIPANT: I will keep it tight. Something that hasn't -- actually, a perfect segue into this.

Something that hasn't been mentioned too often in this group is community. I said I was wearing multiple hats today, and so now I'm going to be speaking as the Pima County Interfaith Council, and I feel like I need to explain why they are at the table and why am I, as an educator, speaking to that point.

I realized when I introduced myself, I

didn't introduce myself as also the president of the Marana Education Association. So I'm also representing labor here.

The Pima County Interfaith Council is a coalition of faith-based organizations, as well as teacher associations, education associations, and is a broad-based community activist organization. It is a group of people that come together from across the community for common concerns.

And, of course, this education issue is a fundamental common concern.

Someone mentioned conversation, and that's exactly what we are about, is getting in conversation with the business community, with parents, with all segments, all stakeholders. And we've had conversations with him many times, he's been a strong supporter of this group.

And what we -- what I totally agree with is, this takes conversation, not just among the educators, which we tend to do a lot, not just among the business community. And we need to start hearing -- but we left out one important one, which is the parents.

Research shows time and time again that when parents are invested in the community, invested in

the school, test scores go up.

I'm in the trenches every day, and I have been in the trenches on and off for over 30 years. My mother lived in the trenches for 25 years before that, and her father before that. We have a long history of in the trenches.

What I am teaching my English class is a lot different than what was expected 30 years ago. I spent one period this week dealing with suicide prevention. It is an issue we have to deal with. I spent over a week last year in dealing with abstinence and teen pregnancy. It was required. Layers and layers of requirements laid on this (tape inaudible) come from society.

And we can't -- you mentioned that we have to look at society and -- as my husband says, don't go global on me -- and obviously, we aren't going to sit at this table and change society. But we can create conversations that do lead to those changes.

So I definitely wanted to bring up one -- this is kind of a serendipitous thing. We three didn't know we were going to be here.

We were in Austin, Texas, a week ago exploring the Alliance school system, which is a program in Texas where State funds are invested and can

be applied for creating innovative community programs. And one of those programs that has been immensely successful is the Alliance schools. And what Alliance schools simply does is involve the community in the school.

In every situation, they have seen bottom-line schools go to top schools, as far as test scores, because the stakeholders have something to say about it.

So I would like to really encourage us to look at some of those, rather than just becoming taskmasters to get these three exams passed. We begin to look at more creative ways that we are creating citizens, and we are then getting those citizens into a workplace.

You had mentioned a job program, and I am guessing it's Job Cap. You're getting people out -- workers out of --

PARTICIPANT: One of them.

PARTICIPANT: One of them. And Job Cap came about because of Pima County Interfaith Council, coalition of people coming from different walks, that saw a need and stepped into that.

So I'm going to go back to what you said, conversation. We have to begin these

conversations, conversations between the business community, parents, and teachers.

You were part of an economic summit that Pima County Interfaith Council sponsored some years back, which was just exactly that, getting the top business people in the community, sitting down with each other and coming up with some answers.

THE MODERATOR: We've got to go to you now.

PARTICIPANT: I'm going to talk a little bit about the immediate needs. I agree with us needing to work with community and work with business.

And I think your ideas are very valid, and your concerns are very valid. And I couldn't agree with you more.

I think standards are one of the best things that's happened to us in a long time, and I do think that we need to keep the energy of AIMS, because as a staff developer, I can see a difference in the interest and the push towards improving education in this state, and I think it's very valuable to us.

But as I look at the people I work with and our immediate needs, let's say, our next five-year needs to get these kids on board.

Some of my suggestions: First of all, I



agree with everyone in the room. Funding is critical. It's important. I know it's a very difficult thing for the State Department as an isolated entity. It takes the legislature. It takes us putting pressure on the legislature to get this funding where we need to have it to have these qualified people.

But if we live in a real-life situation day to day in our schools right now, these are the things that I see happening. I see everyone training and trying to bring teachers on board with standards.

But I also know there's not the qualified people out there to do that training. I know that there's a lot of isolated training going on, and there isn't that in-depth follow-through to actually make a change. There isn't that evaluation to say, "Okay. This is where our staff is. Let's look at this evaluation. This is what we still need."

It saddened me very, very much this week to hear what one of my large districts did in my county. They wanted to do six-trades training. The district office mandated six-trades training. Well, instead of them going and bringing in this very high-qualified training, it was the principal who went out and read the manual that had been given two years ago at the State Department AIMS and got up there in

front of them for two hours, and they had a six-trades training. I'm sorry, folks, that isn't going to change anybody.

And last, there is qualified solid programs in place. And some things that I could suggest that could take place is, first of all, maybe the State Department could train some very high qualified people that could work with our districts to do trainers of trainers. So we can go in and we can do four or five times six trades, or four or five times on these math standards.

I look for trainers all the time for junior high and high school. It's very difficult for me to find folks that have the expertise to train the teachers. And I think it's a void that we're seeing. Those people that are excellent and very good, they're being overworked and they're being overstressed.

My best trainers for classroom teachers that are doing this on Saturdays and nights, in addition to their jobs, these people are going to burn out on us and we're even going to lose them.

So I think if the State can provide us with some very high quality people to come in and do trainers of trainers within our county offices and within our districts, I think that would very much

benefit the move that we're trying to move toward.

Because I think AIMS is a good idea, and I would be the last one to say the we should remove it. But I think we need to get this thing in motion. And if we look at reality, we have a huge deficit in the number of teachers we're going to be hiring this coming year. How many of those folks are going to know AIMS?

In a personal story, through my 15 years of teaching and different substitutes coming in and taking over my class, some of the substitutes who I would not invite back into my classes are now teachers. You know why? It isn't because principals or the superintendents wanted to hire those people. There's nobody else out there to hire. They have to have somebody in those classrooms, and they can't have classrooms of 50 kids per one teacher.

So we need to look at some of those immediate emergent needs and start working on those to be able to move forward.

Thank you.

PARTICIPANT: I just want -- everything that she said about the changes needed in the English classroom, I want that to happen.

In addition to that, she said people teaching at the middle school level, teaching language

arts, and also mathematics, they need to be qualified. I would like to push that down a little bit further. Elementary teachers need to have content knowledge, because what happens is that we teach what we're comfortable with and what we know.

And if we don't have the content knowledge in the teaching of reading, the teaching of writing, the teaching of mathematics, that we don't have, we end up using a textbook, and that's not good. Depending on the textbook.

A second thing I'd like to talk about is cleaning up the implementation of AIMS. Right now, I think our schools have been very, very generous and very, very compliant in the time that it takes and the scrambling that we've had to make in order to implement this test.

Nobody has any idea what happens at a school when you have to stop for three days to field test in October, test in February, test again in April and May. It's a mess. The teachers, the principals scramble. The teachers scramble. And when you walk in, it's smooth right now, but nobody has any idea what happens to make that smooth.

And the third thing I would like to suggest is a relationship that the State Department has

with us. I think we could have a better relationship. I think the State Department of Education in Arizona needs to realize that we are not the enemy. The schools are not the enemy. We are trying to do what has been required of us. We would like to be supported.

I think publishing premature results in the papers and then blaming, bad-mouthing educators, I don't think that is good. I don't think it makes for good relationships.

I think if we're going to publish results, let's publish good results. The public can understand and that it's not punitive. Let's work together to make this something good for our students, for our community.

PARTICIPANT: I salute the facilitator for the good job she's done today. She's kept things moving well. Well done.

I think that we've all learned something here. If I had a clone or a stamp where I could invent a Jim Click, a Bill Estes, a Dorothy Finley, or a Don Diamond and have every student be them 20 years later, we'd have an extremely successful community.

But I also believe in diversity. I challenge the State Department on that (tape inaudible)

the State Department is only doing what the politicians want them to do. And I think they're caught between a rock and a hard place. The politicians want to please the public; and the teachers, they bear the brunt.

I think we need to diversify AIMS and reexamine education. You know, not everybody's going to go to Harvard. I know (tape inaudible) has a great automotive program that we're involved in. I think Bob Jenson needs to be involved in these programs because of the programs he has.

My point is this. I think there's a tremendous opportunity here to see frontiers, not borders. I think there's a tremendous opportunity here. You know, when we started (tape inaudible) we said, "Let's get a model." Ideas are great. Implementation is tough. "Let's get a model. Let's isolate a model." And I'll be accountable.

I will get some business leaders in a room with some educators. Let's choose a district, or a collection of districts. Let's get some professional development for those kids who may be a little more left side of the brain than right side of the brain, because I think they're as valuable.

And God knows we need diversity. Goodness knows we need a complex, diverse skill base to

attract the new economy. Let's go forward.

PARTICIPANT: I'm going to jump real quick. As part of that, I think -- that's an excellent idea, and I think we ought to look at the best practices outside.

I've been to Ottawa, no better technology capital in the world. Ottawa would do a great job in training people and students as well. I think that's an outstanding idea.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT: I want to clarify something that was said about entrance requirements for the university.

Not only do you not have to have a diploma, but the university system in Arizona grants unqualified entrance to students who take specific courses and earn a specific grade.

So if you take a certain list of classes, as prescribed by the university, and score -- and get a certain grade level in those courses, you automatically can go to ASU, U of A, or NAU.

However, that same student could, theoretically, not get a diploma. It seems disjointed that the same state would say you have unqualified entrance to our universities, but you don't have a

diploma.

Going back to this, the point that I made earlier about not putting people in a corner. Why not, instead of saying AIMS is the only route, you can also get your diploma -- you meet the AIMS requirements, so to speak, if you gain unqualified entrance into a university?

So for the parents that said, "My child is just test phobic and cannot pass those tests," we say, "Fine. Take the university-prescribed courses, get the grades, and you will also meet that criteria."

And then, I think somebody else mentioned the idea of incentives is critical. There is no value to doing really well on these tests.

New York does a regent's exam. They have regent's scholarships.

We have a critical need for both math and science people, both in industry and in schools.

Drives me crazy, one of my daughters, who's an excellent math student, is going to do something else because it's more convenient.

Number one -- I think I read the other day the number one major in college in the United States today is recreation administration. And in the Asian countries, it's math and science.



Why can't we say that kids who do really well on math in the AIMS get a scholarship to an Arizona university, just automatic? You score above a certain level, you get a tuition-free admittance to a university, continuing -- assuming you go on to that.

And then, one last issue in terms of what should be done before this is all over. This is a subject that people don't like to talk about, but the reality is that even though we all like outcomes, and I understand exactly what you were saying, we're not building widgets in schools. We have people in schools, kids in schools.

There's a cluster of kids -- almost every school district now is doing some kind of program for those students who have failure. And I tell you, there's a whole group of kids in our society who are really messed up. They're struggling with just surviving day to day.

And all that this is going to do is give them one more failure and one more motivation to go do something terrible. We cannot just -- we don't have disposable kids, I hope, in this society. We've got -- we cannot ignore that.

There has to be some kind of plan for that group that aren't going to pass AIMS and who are

just barely hanging on to life.

PARTICIPANT: Kids are the most renewable resource the United States has. It just takes a man, a woman, and nine months.

PARTICIPANT: I would like to say something about the qualifications.

I know it's important to have qualified people in the middle schools to be able to teach. But we have to be careful on what we call qualifications. Some of your best math teachers aren't math people. But yet, they can have a way of getting across to kids the mathematics that was unclear to them.

I agree with you, we need to put more emphasis into the teaching of the subject, not the subject itself. We have many high school math teachers out there that are more than qualified to teach math. However, they can't get it across to their kids. So, to me, they're qualified, but yet they're not qualified.

So we have to be careful of what we consider qualifications.

PARTICIPANT: Content knowledge. They need content knowledge.

PARTICIPANT: But even then, the content knowledge of mathematics, if they can't get it across

to their kids, it's not doing any good.

THE MODERATOR: A couple of last comments?

Did you have a statement you wanted to make?

PARTICIPANT: Measuring reading, writing, and arithmetic is not what schools are all about. We have a huge mandate to create functional citizens who care about each other and who are capable of being in a democracy.

AIMS does not measure those things. It doesn't measure critical thinking. It doesn't measure problem solving. It doesn't measure communication. It's a great baseline. But if high schools decide that all we're about is putting out AIMS graduates, we're going to do a huge disservice to our society.

All of us are walking that tightrope about, how do we nurture our students' interest in fine arts and clubs and volunteer and service work? Where does that go when kids are stressing about studying for the AIMS test?

So, AIMS is only one piece of the education puzzle, and we don't want to abandon the whole development of the child in order to place that person in a job.

THE MODERATOR: Last comment?

PARTICIPANT: I have a question, and I don't know the answer to this because I don't have a senior in high school yet.

What happens to the seniors that do not pass the AIMS test? Does anybody know what happens?

PARTICIPANT: We haven't gotten to that point yet.

PARTICIPANT: No one has gotten to that point yet?

PARTICIPANT: Not until 2002.

PARTICIPANT: So we don't know the answer.

PARTICIPANT: The students can return to school, if they want to, the following year. Arizona provides a free public education. If students are motivated, they can return to high school the following year.

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to thank you all for your input this morning. We're going to be out of time here. I promised that I'd keep you all on schedule.

There's so much to discuss. This discussion could go on forever.

Your recommendations are valuable and

will be taken forward to the Board. And hopefully some of the dialogue that's begun here will be able to be continued in other forums in the community.

So we really thank you and appreciate your input, and I hope you have a great rest of the day.

(End of tape.)

